

## **Good News Story: Jack found choices he never thought possible.**

*I wrote about Jack's story in May 2007 and it was published on the Department of Education and Workplace Relations (DEWR) website within the Career Tips / Good News Stories section. In 2011 the web-link ceased to exist. Enjoy the story, and remember it is real.*

This story begins with a phone call from Jack's father saying how worried he was about his son but he didn't know how to help.

Jack finished Year 12 with a very low tertiary entrance score, started a short TAFE course in horticulture, quickly became bored and decided he might as well work. He moved to an apprentice landscape gardener position and after a couple of months he was unhappy and had no motivation to be there.

Dad organised four career-counselling sessions and agreed not to influence what Jack said in our initial meeting.

Jack arrived on time and I discovered a very tall athletic young man. He was not comfortable, struggling to make eye contact with me. While small talk and conversation didn't come easily, he was polite and answered my questions.

He came across as not afraid of hard work, and competitive in the sporting arena. Jack had played 150 games of footy, was team captain and well respected by his players. His current thinking was to join the police force.

As I stood up to conclude, handing him his 'homework' he said, "What am I going to tell my boss on Tuesday about my apprenticeship? There's an amnesty until Tuesday if I want to leave; four others have already left".

Over the next 35 minutes we established that it would be stupid to prolong the inevitable; he would give notice the next day (Jack sat 5cm taller in the chair).

'Tell parents tonight' was added to his list of 'homework'.

As Jack became more comfortable with me, he told me how he enjoyed primary school and thought about teaching. Secondary college was "too tough academically even though I always did my homework". After year 10 Jack chose TAFE because "a footy component was offered within the curriculum". Academic expectations at TAFE were lower than his previous school and he spent most of his time doing weights and training.

Jack made several statements:

- "I'm a good football captain on the ground. I'm serious at training but like mucking around I guess."
- "People don't value what I say."

Needing to unpick these two points I obtained permission from him to speak with his Dad and his oldest brother.

It was important for his Dad to know it was time to step back but that his help might be needed again later A “homework” task had sought feedback from others about a “perfect job” fit and a brother put forth two ideas;

1. *“Elite/challenging level eg: military / police”;*
2. *“The top level – the goal is to see way through, the steps in between is what’s required”.*

*These seemed to reinforce my ideas about Jack’s undervalued skills and special leadership abilities.*

His brother had recently returned from overseas. I discovered he’d had different experiences from the family and we established Jack’s natural gifts were different from others around him and had probably not been valued within the school system.

Gaining this information allowed Jack to understand he was OK as a person and together we began mapping his career path with a goal of joining the police force. His map showed actions to take that included further TAFE study in Outdoor Education.

Two and a half years later a very confident young man appeared at my door saying he’d been accepted into university and was going to study to be a primary school teacher.

Jack found choices he never thought would be possible.

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“Everybody's good at something. Find it” , says PINK.

Take Pink’s advice and have a go at mapping your career-life path. Never give up. Ask for help if you get stuck.

P.S. PINK also says “Stupid is selling yourself short”. Don’t let this happen to you!